

## **In Support of HB 4993**

### **Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association**

**October 1, 2013**

Madame Chairwomen, (Rep. Andrea LaFontaine), members of the House Natural Resources Standing Committee, presenters and guests; my name is Dennis Eade, Executive Director, of the Michigan Steelhead & Salmon Fishermen's Association; the largest sport fishing association in the Great Lakes Basin.

I am here today to speak in support of HB 4993 which would create the MICHIGAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND and the MICHIGAN WILDLIFE COUNCIL (MWC) by adding an extra \$1 charge on hunting and fishing licenses.

The Michigan Wildlife Council will be charged with developing and implementing a comprehensive media-based public information program to educate this state's general public about the benefits of wildlife, wildlife management, and the important role sportsmen play in wildlife and wildlife management.

There are 1.7 million fishers\* and 530,000 hunters in Michigan who spend \$4.8 billion on related retail sales, support 72,000 jobs, and pay \$576 million in state & local taxes. Yet our numbers are declining each year, because "there just isn't enough time" in our busy lives with job and family demands to get outdoors and enjoy the abundant natural resources our state offers. How do we reverse that trend? We can reverse it through public education and outreach about the benefits of fishing and hunting, not only for the good of wildlife and wildlife management but for the quality of life it provides sportsmen and women and their families. We can realize an increase from the growing ranks of female hunters and fishers and young hunters and fishers wanting to connect with the great outdoors in a more fundamental way.

It starts with a worm and a bobber and then you are hooked for a lifetime of fishing enjoyment. That bait starts to add up, and then the spinners or crank bait or other artificial flies and lures are added to the mix. Don't forget about the rods and reels.

Add in all of the tackle boxes, hooks, lines and sinkers, and fishing equipment and you have a \$7.6 billion fishing industry in the U.S. Taxes (Pittman-Robertson 11% excise tax) on the sale of this equipment go to fund conservation and will provide the needed federal funding to supplement the revenue from license sales in Michigan to fund our DNR.

It doesn't stop there. That's just the tip of the iceberg. Many anglers book guided trips on our rivers and charters on our Great Lakes. Those trips usually require hotel lodging stays – or they might just decide to buy a cabin or camper for a more personal overnight trip. That's why the Michigan Steelheaders have partnered with the Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan to promote tourism and especially fishing related tourism across the state. And that's why we need a comprehensive media-based public information program to educate this state's general public about the benefits of fishing and hunting.

The other reason we need to pass HB 4993 is to dispel the notion that the public doesn't approve of hunting and fishing. Organizations like the Doris Day Animal League and The Humane Society of the United States are growing in influence, popularity and strength in promoting their animal protection movement. With the commitment and support of its robust membership, HSUS has spearheaded successful efforts to pass more than 60 state laws in the recent past, won several cases to protect wildlife and enforce laws banning trapping. They would like to undermine Michigan's outdoor heritage and love of hunting and fishing by getting laws passed to take away the rights of hunters and fishermen to pursue their sport and in so doing undermine the DNR's role in wildlife management.

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A recently released nationwide scientific survey by Responsive Management show that 79% of Americans 18 years old and older approve of hunting; up five percentage points from 74% in 2011. That marks the highest level of support for hunting since 1995. Since 2006, hunting participation has increased by 9% across the country according to the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation. 9% gave a natural answer and only 12% disapproved (strongly or moderately) of hunting.

A comprehensive media-based public information program to educate Michigan's general public about the benefits of wildlife management and the important role sportsmen play in wildlife management is the way to stop groups like HSUS from coming into Michigan and attacking our outdoor heritage and hunting and fishing traditions.

Passage of HB 4993 will mark the beginning of statewide effort by sportsmen to educate the public with the facts about hunting and fishing and prevent the 12% from hijacking the public's favorable view of hunting and fishing.

HB 4993 needs our full support. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on its behalf.

\*America's Sporting Heritage: Fueling the American Economy, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation